

## **Opening Statement by H.E. Mr. Alounkeo KITTIKHOUN**

**Minister to the Prime minister's Office, Deputy Chairman of the Lao National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mothers-Children, Head of the Lao Delegation to the 71<sup>st</sup> Session of the Committee on Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)  
2 November 2018, Geneva, Switzerland**

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**Madame Chairperson,**

**Distinguished members of the Committee,**

On behalf of the Lao delegation, I wish to extend my warmest greetings to all the Committee members and I am delighted to be in Geneva for this dialogue regarding the CEDAW implementation. The Lao PDR recognizes the Committee as an important mechanism of the human rights system, composed of 23 highly competent independent experts. We look forward to a constructive engagement with the Committee for today's session. Together, we shall assess the implementation of the CEDAW by the Lao PDR, with objectivity, equal treatment and respect for state sovereignty. The Lao PDR takes the CEDAW reviewing process seriously, as it provides an opportunity for the government to showcase what we have done in terms of promoting gender equality and women's rights and interests, to inform the international community about our national policies, actions and achievements in implementing the rights of women, and also to share our experiences and learn the good practices from other countries. Subsequently, we shall receive the valuable and constructive observations from the Committee.

**Distinguished members of the Committee,**

Following the review of the Lao PDR's 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> CEDAW report in 2009, all recommendations have been translated into Lao and disseminated to government officials, stakeholders and the general public. From the very beginning, the Government has assigned the line-ministries and state organizations through the National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mothers and

Children (NCAWMC) both at central and local level, to implement CEDAW recommendations that were related to their respective roles and functions. Many CEDAW recommendations have been integrated into 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plans (NSEDP) for the period 2011-2015 and 2016-2020 respectively and they are being implemented through policies, laws, strategies and action programmes.

In order to enhance the level of coordinating, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the obligations and rights of the women to which the Lao PDR is party, the Lao Government established the National Commission for the Advancement of Women in 2003 and until now it still plays the key role in the promotion of gender equality and elimination of discrimination against women in Lao PDR.

**Madame Chairperson,**

In preparing for the 8<sup>th</sup>- 9<sup>th</sup> National Report under CEDAW, the National Commission took the leading role in term of coordination with all relevant government agencies. In collaboration with UN Women, we have organized the consultation workshops with stakeholders, including with the mass organizations, development partners, INGOs and civil society organizations who are based in the Lao PDR and have the responsibilities to promote and protect women's rights. This National Report gives full accounts of the achievements and challenges in implementing the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee.

I would like to express our appreciation to the Committee for the useful and meaningful recommendations which helped the Government to enhance the work on promoting gender equality and women's rights and interests in Lao PDR.

**Esteemed members of the Committee,**

The Lao Government attaches great importance to the rights and interests of specific groups in the country. The Lao PDR is a multi-ethnic nation consisting of 49 ethnic groups living in harmony. The

Constitution, policies and laws of the Lao PDR have always been to encourage solidarity, non-discrimination and equal treatment of all ethnic groups. Any acts of division of solidarity among ethnic groups are prohibited and punishable by Law. The rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities are protected and promoted through the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Constitution and laws, sub laws, national strategies and action plans. This includes the Law on the Development and Protection of Women, Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children, Law on Anti-Trafficking In Persons, and the amended Law on State Budget which prescribes the responsibilities of all sectors to allocate budget for gender equality. The Law on Labour and Law on Civil Servants also provide for the interests of women such as maternal leave and paternity leave.

The Lao PDR has continued to improve its governance and public administration to be more effective, transparent, accountable and participatory with an aim to providing better services to women. The Lao Government is currently implementing the Legal Sector Master Plan on the Development of the Rule of Law by 2020 taking into account the UN Declaration on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2012. In strengthening the national rule of Law, the National Assembly has adopted and amended more than 100 laws in the political, judicial, national defense, public security, economic, social, cultural and environmental domains.

One of the most important developments currently on national database, two important national studies and surveys on the Violence against Women have been conducted and made available to the public: Estimating the Resource Requirements for a Minimum package of Essential Services for Women Experiencing Violence in Lao PDR and the Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS) II. They are the main achievements of the government which has contributed to the implementation of our commitments on a number of obligations,

including but not limited to (i) the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and (ii) the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Madame Chairperson,**

The Lao PDR is in the process of implementing the 8<sup>th</sup> Five-year National Socio-economic Development Plan (the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP) with significant achievements being made. As such, most of the SDGs indicators along with most of the CEDAW recommendations especially those related to the right to health, education, political employment, nutrition, development, protection and participation have been integrated into the current NSEDP and progressively realized.

At regional level, the Lao PDR has contributed to the development of women's rights in ASEAN in terms of institutional building and standard setting. The Lao PDR actively participates in ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) and has contributed to drafting of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration and other declarations that are related to the promotion and protection of the rights and interests of women in the region.

**Esteemed members of the Committee,**

On this occasion, I would like to thank the secretariat of the Committee for providing all the necessary facilitation. I trust that this dialogue session for the Lao PDR will be successful and productive. The Lao delegation looks forward to all comments and inputs from the committee in this interactive dialogue with you.

Thank you for your kind attention